



The 'First Kytherian' Question

When in 1916, the book "I Zoi en Afstralia" was printed in Greek, in Sydney, the name and only a few details about Emmanuel Kritharis were mentioned on page 293, that included the wrong year of his death, a reference of his being in Australia since 1854 and some information of his very substantial donation to the Greek war effort. No other details were reported that could assist us in our original research in order to establish, with certainty, who was the first Kytherian to arrive in Australia. We must remember that this book was published only three years after Kritharis' death and therefore this information is the result of first hand knowledge.

In 1957 Ioannis Kasimatis published in Greece, his book, on the history of Kythera, mentions on p. 192 that "In the year 1850 (the first Kytherian to immigrate to Australia) was Emmanuel Kritharis." The above information agrees with the reference in the book "I Zoi en Afstralia" as the first alludes to his arrival in Australia, while the second to his departure from the island of Kythera. Unfortunately no proof or any documents were presented to confirm this claim. Strangely and without any justification in the previous few lines, Kasimatis mentions that "some decades ago the first Kytherian to immigrate to Australia... was Athanasios Kominos". Once again no other de-tails or even the year of Kominos' arrival is given in support of this claim. Official records, however, tell us that Athanasios Kominos (Kominos) arrived in Sydney in 1873, almost twenty years after Emmanuel Kritharis.

Later in 1992, Hugh Gilchrist (Australians and Greeks, Vol. 1, p. 209) mentions... "another Kythirian family was that of Kritharis.



The burial ground of Emmanuel Kritharis stayed undisturbed in Woronora General Cemetery

Emmanuel Kritharis, reputed to have arrived in 1854, was a solitary man who is said to have died in Sydney in 1912 after making a large donation to the Greek war effort". Emmanuel Kritharis' incorrect date of death is given but other names of the Kritharis family who came to Australia are mentioned, giving us a full picture of the migration of this clan.

In my book "Kythera a History" published in 1993 the same very limited information is given on page 253 about Emmanuel Kritharis. The claim of his being the first to arrive in

Australia was brief but with a more definite tone, in full knowledge that further information was needed. Since then I have undertaken the task to find fresh information that would permit me to proclaim with surety, that Emmanuel Kritharis was the first Kytherian to have arrived in Australia.

The name of Jack Melitas is mentioned on page 44, in the book "A Shop Full of Dreams", as the pioneer of Kytherian migration. As no documented evidence is put forward this claim was disregarded and I continued with my research. The first Kytherian to arrive in Australia by the name Melitas is mentioned on page 206 of the book "I Zoi en Afstralia" as Demitrios Panagiotou Melitas who arrived in Sydney in 1903 at the young age of seventeen years old.

The Kytherian newspaper, "Kythiraiki Idea" in its publication of February 2003 under the title "Kytherians of the Diaspora" mentions... "Some, claim that the first Kytherian immigrant to Australia was Emm. Kritharis who went there in 1850, the relevant bibliography however converge with the view that the first Kytherian ... was Athanasios Kominos who in 1875 at the age of 29 years arrived in that distant continent." Claims made in this article are completely unsupported and my research proves otherwise as no bibliography that we know has produced evidence to support this claim. It is regretful that "Kythiraiki Idea"

even published a photo of Athanasios Kominos with the caption... "the first Kytherian immigrant to Australia", when we know that he was not.

These are all the known "bibliographies" in reference to the question of the first Kytherian to arrive in Australia. The insistence of a number of commentators and reporters in ignoring the name of Emmanuel Kritharis in favour of that of Athanasios Kominos, who as mentioned, arrived in Australia in 1873, presented to me the challenge to attempt, once and for all, to uncover undisputed evidence to support my original claim that Emmanuel Kritharis arrived in Australia in 1854 and therefore he was the first Kytherian to arrive in Australia.

To my surprise, the new information collected, revealed much more than was ever known before about Emmanuel Kritharis, that proves beyond reasonable doubt, he was the pioneer of Kytherian immigration to Australia. Written evidence of the exact date of his arrival in Australia has not been found. Yet, the new information uncovered further strengthens the claim, that Emmanuel Kritharis had arrived in Australia in 1854 and therefore he was the first to reach this new continent down under.

Emmanuel Kritharis, according to his death certificate Number 2366, died on Sunday the 9th March 1913, aged 81, therefore he was born in Kythera in 1832. At a very young age, hunger and uncertainty, forced young Emmanuel to leave the island in search of a better life, not unlike so many others, who also made it to the shores of the new continent. After a long wait for the opportunity of a better life he boarded a vessel destined for the unknown continent of Australia. According to Ioannis Kasimatis, Kritharis left the island in the year 1850 and as mentioned in the book "I Zoi en Afstralia" he arrived here in 1854.

The years between 1850-1854, were in most probability, spent in search of employment, or working anywhere he could, before the decision was made to seek his fortune in Australia, as rumors were running wild about discoveries of gold in N.S.W. and Victoria (1851). After a long, difficult and perilous voyage of many months he found himself possibly in the goldfields where young Emmanuel, soon, made his fortune. We know that as early as 1852, as many as thirty sailors had found their way to the goldfields of Australia. It is unfortunate that the records do not provide us with names or other details, so most of them will remain anonymous until further new information comes to hand.

For reasons unknown to us Kritharis moved to Mortdale N.S.W. in 1861 where he lived for



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